

## **Report on Workshop D: Significance of code of ethics and the patient charter**

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### ***1. What is the relevance of the code of ethics in clinical practice?***

Codes of ethics in clinical practice serve as guidelines for the healthcare professional that include the rights, responsibilities and limits within the profession. They also guard both the healthcare professionals and the patients against abuse.

### ***2. To what extent are health carers aware of this Code of Ethics?***

Most of the nurses felt that although they are aware of the Code's existence and have been given the booklet, some are still not aware of its contents. It was argued that there could have been better "launching" of the Code. Suggestions were put forward regarding periodic awareness sessions of the Code. This may be done through seminars at the workplace. The nurses felt that the Code could be better understood if discussed with examples by case studies.

### ***3. What are the characteristics of the health care professional according to the Malta Code of Ethics?***

The characteristics of health care professionals should encompass the qualities of maintaining confidentiality and patient empowerment. The importance of projecting a professional image was highlighted. This can be achieved by keeping up-to-date with current issues and practice development.

### ***4. Are patients aware of their rights and responsibilities? How do they become aware of them?***

Patients may not always be aware of their rights and responsibilities. There are several ways of how one can promote awareness of the patient

charter. For evaluation purposes, some suggestions included giving relevant booklets on admission and self-administered questionnaires upon discharge. These serve as an audit to assess patient satisfaction.

One also needs to invest in more education of staff to reduce the paternalistic attitude that obstructs patients' rights. Since some patients who take on the sick role tend to have a submissive attitude, it is even more important to empower them with information. Media may also be utilized to promote patients' rights and responsibilities.

***5. Should the nurse act as a patient's advocate when the patient's rights are violated?***

Yes. However one needs to assess the situation and go through the appropriate people.

***6. When something goes wrong in the clinical situation, should the health carer act as a whistle-blower?***

Yes. However one needs to use tact, knowledge, good communication skills, and be assertive. Prior to whistle-blowing on malpractice, one needs to know and have evidence based knowledge on practice.